necessarily reflect our own quirks and peculiarities. We look through a keyhole at the strange contortions and capers of those who have become addicted to what Blake called *the strongest poison ever known . . . from Caesar's laurel crown*.

Thus, for instance, the assumption throughout *The Thirties* is that the capitalist system is irretrievably doomed, and that some form of collectivist economy, whether or not called communist, is inescapable everywhere. When in the early years of the decade I surveyed the ravages of the great depression from my editorial perch in the offices of the *Manchester Guardian,* I was entirely convinced that the economic arrangements which had produced so tragic and lamentable a state of affairs were bound to be discarded for ever. In the U.S.S.R., I considered, an alternative system was in process of construction, and gave every promise of being the wave of the future. By the time I came to write *The Thirties,* a stint in Moscow as a newspaper correspondent had cured me of the latter assumption, but the former remained intact.

Well, as things have turned out the capitalist system, as amended by the agile brain of John Maynard Keynes, would seem to be in a more flourishing condition than ever before. In the U.S.A., where in theory at any rate its exigencies are the most respected and its operations the least impeded, far and away the richest, and technologically speaking the most resourceful, human community in the history of the world has come to pass. It is true that there are aspects of this

prosperity, such as its ever-increasing accumulation of indebtedness, which give rise to doubts about its permanence, and that in baleful eyes like mine it can seem nothing more than a glorified trough set about with erotic squalor; a pkce of barbiturate sleep, benzedrine joy and vitamin well-being. Equally, it may be argued that it, too, has "in reality become a collectivist society, whose rulers' nominal championship of free-enterprise economics and representative institutions is as empty as die equivalent Soviet championship of Marxist economics and People's Democracy. Even so, the fact remains that to-day American prosperity, and the way of life